

SENATOR TED KENNEDY, JR.

Twelfth District

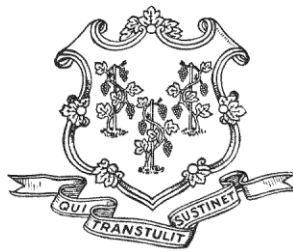
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State of Connecticut
SENATE

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Internship Committee

Member

Public Health Committee

Transportation Committee

November 18, 2015

Ms. Margaret A. Thomas
Connecticut State Geologist
Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Ms. Thomas:

I am contacting you to request your assistance in resolving an important issue regarding the government names of certain landmarks. I am directing this inquiry to your attention in your capacity as Connecticut's representative to the State Geographic Names Board (SGNB).

For at least the last 100 years, a U.S. navigational buoy in the waters near my hometown of Branford, Connecticut has borne the name "Negro Heads." According to navigational instructions in E. M. Blunt's widely-used coastal pilot and guide books from the 1800s, the buoy was historically referred to by an even more racially derogatory and hurtful term.

Needless to say, the name of this buoy – as well as the name of the rocks that it marks – is antiquated and offensive to me and other Branford citizens. The waters and undersea property of Long Island Sound are owned by Connecticut's citizens, and as Senate Chair of the General Assembly's Environment Committee, I want to ensure these public trust assets are managed with the highest degree of integrity. Given the disrespectful and negative connotations associated with the buoy name, I would appreciate any assistance that you can provide in my efforts to change it.

It is my understanding that the process of changing a buoy name on NOAA nautical charts and government maps requires submission of an application to the United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN), which would then be commented on by the SGNB. Further, it appears that the suggestion for a new name would come from the SGNB. I would welcome any information you could provide regarding the application process, the most appropriate person or agency to submit this application, and what steps need to be taken to ensure this process is successful. I would also appreciate a clearer understanding of the State of Connecticut's and U.S. Government's overall policies for changing similarly-named geographic landmarks.

Thank you for your attention to this most important matter. Please contact Jared Savas, Clerk of the Environment Committee, at 860-240-0431 or jared.savas@cga.ct.gov with any information you are able to provide. I look forward to working with you to resolve this issue on behalf of the residents of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ted Kennedy Jr.".

Ted Kennedy, Jr.
State Senator, 12th Senate District

CC: Robert Klee, Commissioner – CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
Jamie Cosgrove, First Selectman – Town of Branford